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COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

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Ad Hoc Committee of the Principal Opium-producing
Countries

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING

held at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of
Ankara, on Thursday, 24 November 1949, at 11.30 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: His Excellency Mr. Ali TARHAN

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COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS TERMS OF
REFERENCE (Item 4 of the Agenda)

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requirements of opium for
medical and scientific needs

Present:

Attendance as at second meeting.

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QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE AD HOC COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE (item 4 of the Agenda)

- (a) Methods of determining world requirements of opium for medical and scientific reasons

At the invitation of the CHAIRMAN,

Mr. STEINIG (Representative of the Secretary-General) gave a brief review of the problem and stated that in order to be able to limit the production of opium to medical and scientific needs, it was clearly necessary to know those needs as accurately as possible. In the case at issue, two methods of determining them could be envisaged, namely, an indirect method based on the estimates of needs in morphine furnished by Governments in accordance with the 1931 Convention, and a direct method based on estimates of needs in opium furnished by the consuming countries themselves.

By the provisions of the 1931 Convention, every country and dependent territory was required to furnish on 1 August each year an estimate of its legitimate needs for the following year. If, for any reason whatsoever, those estimates were not provided, the Supervisory Body was authorized itself to frame estimates of a binding character, regardless of whether the countries concerned were or were not parties to the Convention. On 1 December each year, the Supervisory Body drew up a table giving, against the name of each country, the estimates of needs by categories.

In the case of morphine, a distinction was made between the consumption of morphine as such on the one hand, and the consumption of morphine after conversion into codeine, dionine or heroin on the other. Knowing the morphine content of the opium, on an average between 11.75 per cent, it was possible to calculate the quantities of opium required for the manufacture of morphine, starting from the estimates of world needs in morphine.

In this connection, he observed that the estimated needs in morphine for 1950 amounted to 74,600 kg., of which only 8,000 kg. would be used in the form of morphine, the remainder being intended for conversion into codeine, dionine etc.

It should also be noted that during the past fifteen years, the quantities of morphine used (8,000 to 9,000 kg. a year) had not varied much. After the entry into force, in 1929, of the Convention 1925, the average yearly production of morphine

/had been

had been reduced from 60,000 kgs to 29,000 kg. for the period 1931-1935, whereas in 1950 it would amount to 74,000 kg., although the use of morphine as such had not increased.

The figure of 74,000 kg. of morphine could be taken as equivalent to approximately 620 tons of opium. However, it should be borne in mind that estimates submitted by Governments had been written up by from 15 to 20 per cent, and that the figure of 74,000 kg. could accordingly be reduced to 62,000 kg., which corresponded to about 520 tons of opium. However, this figure did not represent the total volume of world trade, since countries such as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Yugoslavia and India, among others, made some use, in the manufacture of drugs, of opium produced locally which, in consequence, did not appear in the statistics for international trade. In these circumstances, it should be assumed that the volume of international trade amounted to about 450,000 kg. of opium.

He thought that such an indirect method of framing estimates would be unsatisfactory if it was desired to reach an agreement enabling the production and export of opium to be effectively limited to strictly medical and scientific needs. It would therefore be necessary, in his opinion, to confer on the estimates the status of "Advance orders", which would be to some extent binding on Governments.

It should further be pointed out that the estimates were drawn up some five months in advance in the case of manufactured products, but that estimates of needs in opium would have to be submitted at latest on 15 March in the year preceding that to which they related. In practice, if the poppies were sown during the month of September, cultivators would have to be advised as early as May of the area which they were permitted to sow, and the Supervisory Body would therefore have to be in possession of the estimates during the month of March, to enable it to transmit them to the producing countries in April at the latest.

The International Purchasing and Selling Agency would have to maintain an emergency stock of opium, in view of the fact that, on the one hand estimates would never coincide exactly with needs, and, on the other hand, the result of the opium harvest would always be problematical.

In conclusion, he emphasized the advantages offered by the direct method of determining legitimate needs in opium.

/Mr. AMINI

Mr. AMINI (Iran) stated that he was prepared to accept, on behalf of his Government, the direct method advocated by the Representative of the Secretary-General.

Mr. COEHLO (India) also supported the suggestion of the Representative of the Secretary-General, and submitted to the Committee a proposal stipulating, among other things, that the estimates to be submitted should relate, not only to needs in raw opium for medical and scientific purposes, but also to needs for other approved uses; and that the needs of a country for manufacturing purposes which it was intended to cover from domestic production should not have to be communicated to the international authority whose task it was to assemble the statistics.

Mr. KUSHEVITCH (Yugoslavia) stated that his delegation too was prepared to accept the direct method of arriving at estimates, but that it reserved its position in respect of the proposal submitted by the representative of India until that proposal had been circulated to delegations in writing.

Mr. KARABUDA (Turkey) supported the remarks made by the Yugoslav representative with reference to the Indian proposal, and requested that all proposals submitted to the Committee should be put in writing.

Mr. STEINIG (Representative of the Secretary-General) feared that the proposal made by the Indian representative might not conform with the very precise terms of reference given to the Committee by the Economic and Social Council, which made no mention of other approved uses. He suggested that, in order to give due consideration to the reasons underlying the proposal of the representative of India and to the special situation of that country, it would be preferable to include a specific provision of a temporary nature, rather than to incorporate in the instrument a general clause.

Moreover, it was clear that in order to determine world production it was essential to know the total production of all countries, regardless of whether they were producing or consuming countries.

After a short exchange of views,

It was decided that the next meeting should take place on Monday, 20 November, in order that members of the Committee might have an opportunity of studying the question thoroughly.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.
